

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0161

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 1338

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN TAKES FORM

REF: SD 0914, SD 1087, SD 0869

1. SUMMARY. NAMES OF FIVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, INCLUDING THAT OF PRESIDENT BALAGUER, HAVE NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY REGISTERED WITH THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD. WHILE THE GODR HAS SHOWN AN INTERNAL COHESION, OPPOSITION PARTIES CONTINUE TO BE PLAGUED WITH DISSENSION AND PERSONAL RIVALRIES WHICH WEAKEN THEIR POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE GODR. CONTINUING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND AN UNCHARACTERISTIC SOCIAL TRANQUILITY IN THIS PRE-ELECTION PERIOD FURTHER ENHANCE BALAGUER'S PROSPECTS FOR HIS WIDELY-ANTICIPATED ELECTORAL VICTORY AT THE POLLS ON MAY 16. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH THE PASSING OF THE MARCH 31 DEADLINE FOR THE 12 NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED POLITICAL PARTIES TO PRESENT THEIR LISTS OF CANDIDATES TO THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD (JCE) FOR APPROVAL, THE DOMINICAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN HAS NOW TAKEN ON A MORE CLEARLY DEFINED SHAPE. THE PRESENT POLITICAL LINEUP FOR THE MAY 16 ELECTIONS (WHICH IS, OF COURSE, SUBJECT TO CHANGE) IS AS FOLLOWS:

A. PRESIDENT BALAGUER AND VICE PRESIDENT GOICO MORALES,
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CANDIDATES ON A JOINT REFORMIST PARTY/NATIONAL YOUTH MOVEMENT

TICKET. THIS SLATE IS ALSO SUPPORTED BY THE CONSTITUTIONAL ACTION PARTY (PAC) AND THE NATIONAL CIVILIAN VETERANS PARTY (PNVC).

B. ANTONIO GUZMAN AND EX-GENERAL ELIAS WESSIN Y WESSIN, SUPPORTED BY THE SANTIAGO ACCORD PARTIES, I.E., THE DOMINICAN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRD), QUISQUEYAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PQD), THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRSC), AND THE DOMINICAN POPULAR MOVEMENT (MPD). IN ADDITION, THIS TICKET HAS THE BACKING OF SPLINTER GROUPS OF THE NATIONAL CIVIC UNION (UCN) AND THE NATIONAL CONCILIATION MOVEMENT (MCN).

C. FRANCISCO AUGUSTO LORA AND LUIS AMIAMA TIO, BACKED BY THE MOVEMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INTEGRATION (MIDA) AND THE SMALL AMIAMA ORGANIZATION (GIAT). THIS SLATE IS ALSO SUPPORTED BY A FACTION OF THE UCN AND BY THE MINISCULE DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL ALLIANCE (ASD).

D. IN ADDITION, TWO MINOR PARTY CANDIDATES HAVE ALSO BEEN RECOGNIZED: JAIME MANUEL FERNANDEZ OF THE MCN AND EX-REAR ADMIRAL LUIS HOMERO LAJARA BURGOS OF THE POPULAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDP).

3. THE SO-CALLED NATIONAL DIGNITY BLOC LED BY JUAN BOSCH SEEMS TO BE MORIBUND, IF NOT ACTUALLY DEFUNCT, FOLLOWING BOSCH'S DRAMATIC WALKOUT OF THE BLOC'S PUBLIC MEETING ON MARCH 17 (SD 1122). SINCE THEN, THE BLOC HAS NOT MET AND THERE ARE SEEMINGLY NO CURRENT PROSPECTS FOR ITS DOING SO. IN ANY EVENT, BOSCH REPORTEDLY WILL THROW WHAT REMAINS OF HIS WANING POLITICAL STRENGTH BEHIND THE LORA-AMIAMA TICKET, LARGELY AS A MEANS OF ATTACKING THE GUZMAN-LED SLATE AGAINST WHICH BOSCH HAS DEMONSTRATED A DEEP PERSONAL ANIMOSITY.

4. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT GENERALLY GIVES THE APPEARANCE OF INTERNAL UNITY AND COHESION (AS WELL AS CONFIDENCE THAT IT WILL WIN IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS), THE OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO DISPLAY INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS IN ITS MANEUVERINGS FOR POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS AND CHOICE OF CANDIDATES. THE CRASS OPPORTUNISM, EPITOMIZED BY THE ACTION OF MIDA VICE PRESIDENT GUARIONEX LLUBERES MONTAS, WHO BOLTED HIS PARTY TO ACCEPT

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THE PRD NOMINATION FOR MAYOR OF THE NATIONAL DISTRICT, HAS SURPRISED EVEN THE ALREADY POLITICALLY SKEPTICAL DOMINICANS. INDEED, EVEN WITH THE PASSING OF THE MARCH 31 DEADLINE, MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT THE OPPOSITION MANEUVERING TO CONTINUE AS EACH PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION CANDIDATE CONTINUES HIS EFFORTS TO INDUCE HIS OPPONENT TO DROP HIS CANDIDACY IN FAVOR OF THE OTHER.

5. WITH ONLY SIX WEEKS REMAINING BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, BOTH THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE MAJOR URBAN AREAS ARE REMARKABLY QUIET. MOST DOMINICANS SEEM TO BE APATHETIC WITH RESPECT TO THE ELECTIONS AS THEY CONTINUE TO ENJOY THEIR UNPRECEDENTED ECONOMIC BOOM, TAKING FOR GRANTED THAT BALAGUER'S WIDELY EXPECTED VICTORY WILL BRING SEVERAL YEARS MORE OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE ECONOMIC SLUMP WHICH IN 1966 AND 1970 CHARACTERIZED THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD HERE IS ABSENT THIS YEAR, INDICATING INCREASED BUSINESS SECTOR CONFIDENCE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION STARTS AND NEW INVESTMENT, BELLWETHERS OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE, HAVE NOT DIMINISHED DURING THIS ELECTORAL PERIOD AND A SENSE OF BULLISHNESS SEEMS TO PERVADE THE ECONOMY. MOREOVER, AS THE WORLD SUGAR PRICE REMAINS AT RECORD LEVELS, THE DOMINICAN SUGAR QUOTA IN THE US PREFERENTIAL MARKET REACHES NEW HIGHS, AND GOOD WEATHER PROMISES ANOTHER GOOD AGRICULTURAL YEAR, DOMINICANS CAN ANTICIPATE THAT THE CURRENT ECONOMIC PROSPERITY WILL CONTINUE, AT LEAST FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

6. ALSO SERVING BALAGUER'S REELECTION PROSPECTS, THE SECURITY SITUATION HERE REMAINS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY CALM. APART FROM THE UBIQUITOUS POSTERS AND OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS PROCLAIMING VARIOUS CANDIDATES, THERE IS SURPRISINGLY LITTLE EVIDENCE IN THIS HIGHLY POLITICIZED SOCIETY THAT A NATIONAL ELECTION IS ONLY SIX WEEKS AWAY. PUBLIC TENSIONS AND EX
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